

BACKGROUND

THE OUTLOOK FOR THE SUDAN

Historical Developments

- I. Sudan first conquered by Muhammad Ali, founder modern Egypt, in 1821 in search gold and slaves. Exploitation and maladministration precipitated revolt by religious fanatic proclaimed himself the Mahdi - or awaited religious leader. Mahdi's forces defeated "Chinese" Gordon at Khartoum in 1885 and most of Sudan subject to his control for next 13 years.
- II. Sudan reconquered 1898 by Anglo-Egyptian force under General Kitchener. Proclaimed a condominium under joint British and Egyptian sovereignty in 1899. From then until inauguration Sudanese self-government in January 1954, Britain dominated Sudanese administration but appearance joint sovereignty maintained. Country run as paternalist estate by British Sudanese Political Service renowned for high calibre of its officials drawn from best of Oxford and Cambridge - "A country of Blacks run by Blues".
- III. Union of Egypt with Sudan a popular nationalist cry in Cairo for past 30 years. In October 1951 nationalist Nafid-dominated Egyptian parliament "abrogated" in 1899 Sudan Condominium Agreement and amended Egyptian constitution to provide for unity of Sudan under Egyptian crown.

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IV. Action never recognized by Britain or Sudanese. In February 1953 negotiation with Nasr regime resulted in Anglo-Egyptian agreement for Sudanese self-government and eventual self determination. Terms of agreement signed 12 February 1953 provide for:

- A. A five-man commission (composed of 2 Sudanese, 1 Britisher, 1 Egyptian, and a Pakistani chairman) to advise governor general of Sudan, traditionally a British official. Governor general retains certain "reserve powers" for internal security and responsible to Britain and Egypt for foreign affairs.
- B. Agreement called for election 97-seat house of representatives and 30 members of 50-member senate. Remaining 20 members appointed by governor general. Parliament elected in December 1953 following month-long elections gave Egyptian-sponsored National Unionist Party (NUP) decisive victory.
- C. Inauguration of Sudanese parliament - held 9 January 1954 - to begin "transitional period" of self-government not to exceed three years. "Transitional period" to be ended when Sudanese parliament passes resolution calling for "self-determination". (Extraordinary session of parliament scheduled for mid-August expected to pass resolution). Elections will then be held for Constituent Assembly which will decide future of Sudan - full independence or form of union with Egypt - and will draft constitution for Sudan.

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- D. All British and Egyptian military forces - each maintain one infantry battalion at Khartoum - to be withdrawn within three months of resolution for "self-determination".**
- E. British and Egyptians currently negotiating on arrangements for supervision election Constituent Assembly and final steps to self-determination. On 29 July, Salah Salim, Egyptian minister of national guidance and Sudanese affairs, reportedly suggested to Britain that USSR and Ukraine be members of supervisory commission with Indian chairman. Suggestion tactical move to counter British insistence that neither Britain, Egypt or Sudan be represented on commission. Since Britain agreement required, suggestion has little positive effect.**

The Country:

- IV. Sudan - vast underdeveloped area of some 1,000,000 square miles and estimated population of over 8,000,000 -- sharply divided culturally, ethnically, and geographically along approximately 12th parallel.**
- A. Population: Some 5,000,000 Arabic-speaking Moslems in north. Tropical south - with over 32 mutually unintelligible languages - inhabited by 3,000,000 largely pagan primitive tribes. Of total population only some 2,000 (including 16 women) hold high school diplomas.**

B. Economy: No strategically important natural resources but generally self-sufficient in food. Inadequate transportation system - most areas without all-weather transportation communications - shortage trained personnel and lack capital have restricted economic development. British administration conservative fiscal policy and Sudan enters self-government relatively debt-free and strong financial position. One crop economy, cotton, accounts for 70 to 80% exports and approximately 60% government's revenues.

Politics:

V. Organized political activity in Sudan based on two Islamic religious sects - the Ansar and the Khatmia.

A. Ansar: Headed by Sayyid Abdul Rahman al Mahdi (SAR) - posthumous son of Mahdi - who commands absolute obedience some 1,400,000 followers largely among tribesmen of central and northwestern Sudan. He controls pro-independence UMMA Party which ineffect political counterpart of sect. In past SAR closely identified with British interests.

B. Khatmia: Leader Sayyid Ali Mirghani (SAM). Sects 1,500,000 strength concentrated in north and northeast largely among urban merchants and tradesmen. SAM lacks personal authority over his followers which SAR enjoys. A life-long opponent of SAR, Mirghani has in past tended to align himself with Egypt in effort to counter British support for his rival. Khatmia support for NUP in 1953 elections responsible for its victory.

C. National Unionist Party (NUP): Formed in Cairo 31 October 1952 by merger of five Sudanese pro-union political parties. President: Ismail Azhari became first prime minister; Vice president: Muhammad Nur al Din - leader of extreme pro-unionist wing in party.

1. Party heavily financed by Egyptian funds.
2. Original aim - to achieve union with Egypt.
3. Part won 54 out of 97 seats in house of representatives in 1953 elections.
4. In April 1955 as result overwhelming popular sentiment for independence, part executive committee announced decision to support "independence and full sovereignty".

D. UMMA Party: Political wing of Ansar sect. Violently anti-Egyptian and pro-independence. President: Saddik al Mahdi - son of SAR.

1. Won 23 seats in house of representatives.

Personalities:

A. Sayyid Abdul Rahman al Mahdi (SAR): Eighty-year old posthumous son of the Mahdi of Khartoum. After British re-occupation Sudan in 1898 all other sons of the Mahdi executed. Abdul Rahman spared because of his youth. Held in great reverence by some 1,400,000 members of the Ansar sect. Has enjoyed British support since pro-Egyptian uprisings in Sudan in 1924 when SAR opposed union with Egypt. Has been leading exponent of Sudanese independence. Power behind the Umma Party which nominally headed by his son-Saddik al Mahdi.

- B. Sayyid Ali Mirghani (SAM):** Leader of 1,500,000 followers of orthodox Khatmia sect and considered to hold key to Sudan's future. Mirghani, small devious man, likes to emphasize he is religious not political leader but wields considerable political influence. Salah Salim, Egyptian minister of Sudanese affairs has boasted that Egypt "owns" Mirghani, but Mirghani believed to be sufficiently agile to straddle issues of independence vs. union until outcome is clear and then take winning side. At present he is particularly non-committal. Bitter life-long opponent of SAR and the less orthodox Ansar sect. Personal antagonism may prevent cooperation of two leaders for independence.
- C. Ismail Azhari:** Prime minister and president of National Unionist Party (NUP). Fifty-three year-old graduate of American University Beirut former teacher. Discharged for political activities. Became leading figure in pro-Egyptian unionist groups and headed unionist party. Believed to be heavily supported by Egyptian funds. Became president of NUP when formed in Cairo in 1952 as coalition of pro-unionist Sudanese parties. A keen politician - Azhari realized political climate in Sudan in favor of independence and began modifying his stand on union with Egypt. In April 1955 NUP declared itself for "independence". Has maintained this position in face of mounting Egyptian attack. Azhari apparently intent on remaining in power.